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# **REMIFENTANIL PATIENT CONTROLLED ANALGESIA (P.C.A.) FOR LABOUR WARD**

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## **Remifentanil PCA for Labour Ward**

### **An information sheet for women**

#### **• What is remifentanil PCA?**

Remifentanil is a very short-acting pain relieving drug rather like pethidine. Its pain relieving effect comes on very rapidly, and also wears off very quickly afterwards. A small dose of the remifentanil is given into a drip in your arm at your request by pushing a button on an electronic pump. Remifentanil is not currently licensed for analgesia in labour but it has been used safely and successfully in many obstetric units in the UK for many years

#### **• Who can use remifentanil?**

Remifentanil may be useful in certain situations where for one reason or another women cannot have an epidural. (We would advise women with an allergy to morphine, pethidine or other related drugs not to use remifentanil). If you try remifentanil and then decide to change to another method of pain relief in labour (e.g. pethidine, epidural), all the other options for pain relief are open to you. Having tried remifentanil does not limit your choice. You can continue to use entonox (gas and air) with the remifentanil PCA.

#### **• How is it given?**

To use remifentanil you will need to have a cannula ("drip") placed in a vein, usually on the back of your hand or arm. Otherwise, you need no extra treatment or drugs. The drip is connected to an electronic pump, which delivers a small dose of the drug once you press the hand-held button. The pain relieving effect is felt usually in 20 to 30 seconds, and wears off again within a few minutes. You are in control and you get the drug when you need it and not in between contractions. There is a safety feature built into the pump so that you can only get a safe amount of the drug. You can use the pump at any time right up to your delivery if you wish, and the effects will still wear off very quickly when you stop using the pump after your baby has been born.

#### **• Are there any unwanted effects of remifentanil?**

Some women can get sleepy between contractions, as tends to happen as with pethidine. However, any drowsiness can wear off very quickly after you stop using the pain relief. As part of our routine observations with remifentanil your midwife will measure your oxygen level using a sensor (like a peg) on your finger, as well as your level of pain relief and drowsiness at regular intervals. If oxygen levels fall you will be given extra oxygen via a nasal tube. All observations and treatment are the same as for any other woman on the labour ward. Remifentanil has been shown to be as safe for babies as pethidine.

#### **• When can I ask for remifentanil?**

You can request remifentanil at any time in your labour. Your midwife will arrange to get the pump set up. This normally takes a few minutes but could take longer if the anaesthetist is dealing with another patient. You will be able to use it immediately once you are given the button to push.